Session 2

[Refining Our Reading and Responses to Arguments](https://sites.google.com/site/nwpcrwp/ole/speaking-of-argument/Refining-our-reading-and-responses-to-arguments)

Text set (see below)

March 6, 2014

<http://learni.st/learnings/682047-dance-moms-image?board_id=75141>

<http://articles.latimes.com/2011/oct/14/news/la-heb-girl-scouts-reality-tv-20111014>

Girls and reality TV are a potent combo, Girl Scouts report says

[**October 14, 2011**](http://articles.latimes.com/2011/oct/14)

In the future, what will our well-dressed, mean girl leaders have in common? A childhood filled with a lot of reality television.

A revealing survey released this week from the [Girl Scout Research Institute](http://www.girlscouts.org/research/) exposes the good, bad and ugly influences reality TV may be having on our impressionable female youth. The survey included 1,141 girls across the U.S. age 11 to 17 who were asked about their reality TV-watching habits as well as their opinions on relationships, self-confidence, self-image and success. A little less than half of the girls who took part considered themselves regular reality TV-show watchers, and about a quarter said they rarely or never saw those shows.

http://articles.latimes.com/images/pixel.gifOverall, the girls weren't clueless--everyone surveyed thought reality shows promote bad behavior, 86% felt the shows often set girls against each other to make things more exhilarating and 70% believed that reality TV leads people to think it's all right to treat people badly.

But when they were divided into regular viewers and non-viewers, differences began to appear. Given this statement: "You have to lie to get what you want," 37% of regular reality TV-show viewers agreed versus 24% of non-viewers. On "Being mean earns you more respect than being nice," 37% of viewers agreed versus 25% of non-viewers, and for the statement, "You have to be mean to others to get what you want," 28% of viewers said thumbs up to that, versus 18% of non-viewers.

On the subject of self-image, 72% of regular viewers said they spent a lot of time on their appearance, while 42% of non-viewers said they did. When asked if they would rather be recognized for their outer rather than inner beauty, 28% of reality show watchers said yes, versus 18% of non-watchers.

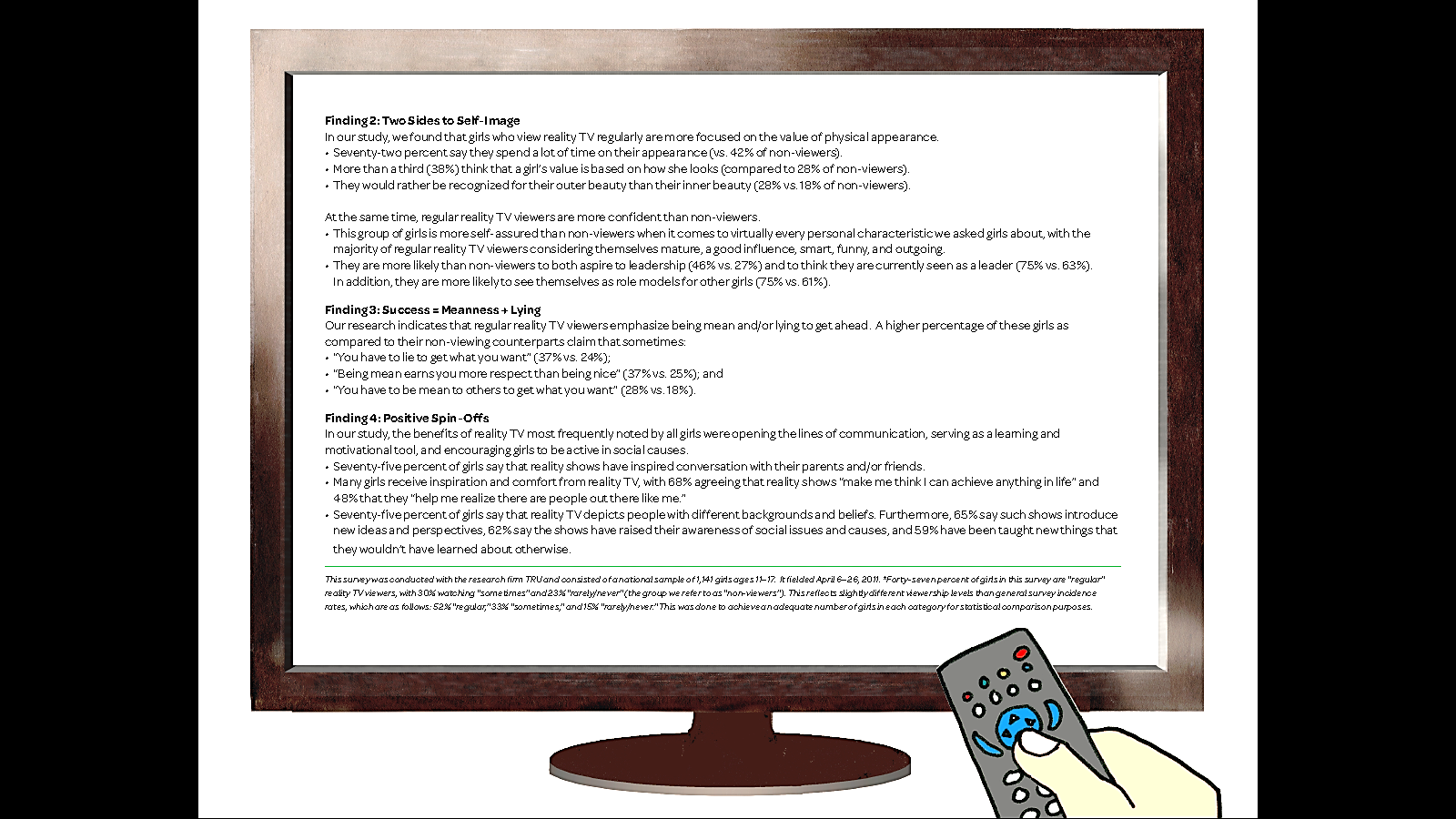
Getting a picture here? Don't be so fast to judge--there's more.

Girls who watched reality TV on a regular basis were more self-assured than non-viewers, with most thinking of themselves as mature, a good influence, outgoing, funny and smart. More aspired to leadership than non-viewers (46% compared with 27%) and were more apt to regard themselves as role models (75% versus 61%).

The shows proved helpful in other ways: 68% thought reality TV made them think they could achieve anything in life, 75% said reality shows featured people will different backgrounds and beliefs, 62% said the shows have made them more conscious of social issues and causes, and 59% reported they found out about new things they may not otherwise have learned. Just what those new things were isn't known. Here are some things we've learned from watching reality TV: Histrionics and flip-outs are much better when there is some action to go along them, such as table-flipping, hair-pulling or object-throwing. If you have to be restrained by several people, that's a win. Also, if you lose at something, make sure you blame everyone and everything within a five-mile radius for your woeful underperformance. And always, always, cry.

"Girls today are bombarded with media--reality TV and otherwise--that more frequently portrays girls and women in competition with one another rather than in support or collaboration," said Andrea Bastiani Archibald, a developmental psychologist with Girl Scouts of the USA, in a news release. "This perpetuates a 'mean-girl' stereotype and normalizes this behavior among girls. We don't want girls to avoid reality TV, but want them, along with their parents, to know what they are getting into when they watch it."http://articles.latimes.com/images/pixel.gif

We have to wonder if this is a chicken-or-egg thing: Are girls who have a predisposition to being mean, shallow, but also confident and driven drawn to reality TV, or does watching such shows make them that way? Do you let your children watch reality TV and if so, do any of these statistics ring true? Let us know.



[**https://www.girlscouts.org/research/publications/girlsandmedia/real\_to\_me.asp**](https://www.girlscouts.org/research/publications/girlsandmedia/real_to_me.asp)

[**http://entertainment.time.com/2013/05/23/why-reality-tv-is-the-new-family-tv/**](http://entertainment.time.com/2013/05/23/why-reality-tv-is-the-new-family-tv/)

**Why Reality TV Is the New Family TV**

By James Poniewozlk

Thirteen summers ago, when a pair of shows called Survivor and Big Brother debuted on [CBS](http://topics.time.com/cbs/), there were uneasy cries that reality [TV](http://topics.time.com/tv/) was coarsening our civilization. Contestants were encouraged to lie and backstab one another! People were eating actual rats! What was going to be next: snuff films?

Thirteen years later, you can debate how well reality TV, overall, has fulfilled its promise as a hell-bound handbasket. But I do know this: when the regular TV season ended last week and the summer premiere season started, it was an exciting time at home, because it meant **Masterchef** was coming back, and we could watch it together with the Tuned In Jrs.

Reality TV is a big, diverse medium, of course: some of it is raunchy, some of it ugly, some obnoxious (like tonight’s despicable let’s-fire-someone-fest Does Someone Have to Go? on Fox), and some of it very, very good. In other words, it’s not unlike scripted TV.

**But another funny thing has happened over the past generation:** reality TV has also become the new version, and maybe the last bastion, of primetime family viewing. It’s not just Masterchef: nearly every TV series my wife and I watch with the Tuned In Jrs. is a reality show.

We handicap The Voice contestants’ odds every week. The Amazing Race has given us a whole new perspective on airport travel. Shark Tank captivates the kids, and has shown me—one of the least entrepreneurial people I know—what a fascinating process valuing a business is. Top Chef, Chopped, Market Warriors—if it involves cooking or selling something, we’ll watch it. Other families I know, anecdotally, are into Storage Wars or Duck Dynasty (the latter, I guess, much like families in the ’60s were into The Beverly Hillbillies).

Most of these are competition reality shows, which is no accident: like sports, reality shows like these are a genre of TV that can appeal to kids’ and adult interests without denying either one. Most of these series are made for adults, often without any particular goal of being all-ages entertainment.

But on their own terms, they reflect things kids—at least, the Tuned In Jrs.—are interested in: competition, creation, scorekeeping. They make performance more exciting, or they game-ify aspects of adult life, like cooking or traveling or making money. And though “appropriate” is a relative term, they tend to do it in relatively clean terms. (OK, last night’s Masterchef included a contestant who cooked roadkill, resulting in about five million “beaver” double-entendres, but if they didn’t sail over the Jrs.’ heads, it’s because they’ve heard far worse on the school bus.)

**When people complain that there are fewer good TV shows for families** to watch together, it’s often assumed that means that TV has become more vulgar or adult. Which of course is true in some ways, but really the overall trend is simply that, as TV has become more various and fragmented, it’s become more *specific*. Everyone has their own demo-targeted TV now, children and parents alike. We actually live in a pretty great era for kids’ TV, and I’ve written endlessly here about great shows that could only exist in a time of many cable outlets and greater creative license. But most adults have limited tolerance for shows written for kids, and it will be years before I show the Jrs. more than the opening titles for [Game of Thrones](http://topics.time.com/game-of-thrones/). (Which they love.)

And by the way, that’s fine. Like any parent now, I find navigating media with my kids to be a challenge sometimes. (Enough with the gross subway ads, please.) But I don’t expect, or want, media to cater to my particular concerns as a parent.

People sometimes assume that, because I’m a TV critic, I’m permissive about what my kids watch. Just the opposite–there are many things I watched as a kid that I would not let my own kids near. Yesterday, when news broke that [Steve Forrest, star of the ’70s drama SWAT, had died](http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/swat-star-steve-forrest-dies-534934), I was overcome with nostalgia, for a show that was pretty much a constant barrage of heavy-weapons fire (with a great theme song). What the hell was I doing watching this when I was seven years old?:

**I remember enough to know that the good old days were not** always as kid-sanitized as we may want to think. (We recently re-watched the original Bad News Bears, a fantastic movie about kids—which also happens to include underage drinking and a zillion racial and homophobic slurs.) And while I may miss The Cosby Show—we’ve been marathoning reruns from the DVR—plenty of the “family” sitcoms from my childhood, however warmly I may remember them, do not exactly hold up well. I’m glad instead that my kids are growing up in a time that has created primetime series like Lost–which they can watch, later, when they’re older.

In the meantime, I’m grateful for reality TV. If it’s sending society to hell, at least the kids and I can go there together.

